

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 /019 R

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DRAFTED BY: AF/E:RSBARRETT:NB

APPROVED BY: AF/E:WBCOOTE

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

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FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 059790 SENT DUBLIN 24 MARCH.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 059790 ACTION ASWAN ADDIS ABABA

AMMAN ASMARA BEIRUT CAIRO JIDDA KHARTOUM DAR ES SALAAM

LONDON LUSAKA MOGADISCIO NAIROBI PARIS ROME

UNUN NEW YORK 17 MARCH.

QUOTE

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TOSEC 656

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, ET, US

SUBJECT: US RESPONSE TO ETHIOPIAN AMMUNITION REQUEST

1. DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN READ FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENT AT MARCH

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17 PRESS BRIEFING:

2. THE US GOVERNMENT HAS INFORMED THE ETHIOPIAN PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT (PMG) THAT THE UNITED STATES IS PREPARED TO SELL TO ETHIOPIA FOR CASH UP TO DOLLARS7 MILLION WORTH OF AMMUNITION. THE US GOVERNMENT TOOK THIS DECISION AFTER DETAILED DISCUSSIONS WITH THE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES CONCERNED BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY THE SOLE SUPPLIER OF ETHIOPIA'S MILITARY NEEDS FOR OVER 20 YEARS; AND THE US DID NOT BELIEVE THAT IT COULD BE TOTALLY UNRESPONSIVE TO THE MOST RECENT REQUEST. AT THE SAME TIME THE US EXPRESSED TO THE EPMG ITS STRONG HOPE THAT THE TWO SIDES IN THE ERITREAN CONFLICT WOULD SOON ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS IN ORDER TO END THE FIGHTING IN ERITREA AND FIND AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO THAT PROBLEM. IN THIS RESPECT, THE US NOTES SOME ENCOURAGING INDICATIONS OF PROGRESS TOWARDS MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES AND THE ELF/PLF.

WE ALSO WISH TO NOTE THAT THE US IS WORKING ON A PARALLEL DIPLOMATIC TRACK WITH OTHER STATES IN THAT AREA IN AN EFFORT TO TRY TO GET NEGOTIATIONS STARTED.

3. Q. COULD YOU TELL US WHEN THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT WAS INFORMED ABOUT THIS AMMUNITION SALE?

A. LAST WEEK.

Q. COULD YOU MAKE IT MORE PRECISE?

A. I DON'T HAVE THE PRECISE DATE ON IT, DAVID.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHAT --

Q. TO GO A LITTLE FURTHER ON THAT, COULD YOU TELL US IN WHAT AREA WE'RE WORKING TO HELP GET NEGOTIATIONS STARTED? IS THAT JOE SISCO, AND IS THAT WITH THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT AS A MEDIATOR?

A. I REALLY CAN'T GO INTO THE DETAILS OF THOSE EFFORTS, DAVID.

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Q. WHAT WAS THE ETHIOPIAN REQUEST?

A. YOU MEAN THE AMOUNT?

Q. YES.

A. WE NEVER INDICATED WHAT THE VALUE OF THAT AMOUNT

WAS.

Q. BUT YOU ARE SAYING HERE THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO BE
TOTALLY UNRESPONSIVE TO THIS. IS THE INFERENCE CORRECT
THAT THIS MEANS THAT THEY ASKED FOR MUCH MORE, AND YOU
ARE A LITTLE BIT RESPONSIVE BY GIVING THEM SEVEN?

A. ON BACKGROUND, I WOULDN'T USE "MUCH MORE," -----
THAT THEY ASKED FOR MUCH MORE BUT THE VALUE OF THE ORIGINAL REQUEST WAS CERTAINLY MORE THAN 7 MILLION DOLS.

Q. WOULD YOU AGREE THAT THEY ASKED FOR FOUR AND A-HALF
TIMES MORE THAN THE SEVEN?

A. I'M NOT GOING TO COMMENT ON ANY COMPUTATIONS ON
YOUR PART.

Q. BOB, IN THIS ETHIOPIAN STATEMENT YOU SAY, "THE
UNITED STATES HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY THE SOLE SUPPLIER OF

ETHIOPIA'S MILITARY NEEDS FOR OVER TWENTY-YEARS, AND,
THEREFORE, IT CANNOT BE TOTALLY UNRESPONSIVE." IS IT THE
STATE DEPARTMENT POSITION THAT REGARDLESS OF WHAT REGIME
RULES A COUNTRY THAT WE CONTINUE TO BE THE SUPPLIER OF
SUCH SUPPLIES?

A. IN GENERAL TERMS, NO, IF YOU ARE SPEAKING GENERALLY
OR HYPOTHETICALLY OR THEORETICALLY. BUT IN THE CASE OF
ETHIOPIA WE HAVE HAD THIS LONG AND CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP
WITH ETHIOPIA, NOT ONLY IN MILITARY SALES BUT IN ECONOMIC
ASSISTANCE AS WELL.

Q. COULD YOU INDICATE WHAT INDICATIONS OF PROGRESS THE
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UNITED STATES HAS RECEIVED TOWARD MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS?

A. I CAN'T GO INTO DETAILS, DAVID, BUT IT'S BASED ON
OUR OWN CONTACTS AND OUR OWN INFORMATION AND CLOSE
CONSULTATION WITH THE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES. ROBINSON
UNQUOTE KISSINGER UNQUOTE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PFOR
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE059790
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AF/E:RSBARRETT:NB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SECSTATE WASHDC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750311/aaaaakcb.tel
Line Count: 160
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 MAY 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <02 JUN 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US RESPONSE TO ETHIOPIAN AMMUNITION REQUEST
TAGS: MASS, ET, US
To: ATHENS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006